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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

pigeon, guilt, hawk, downtown, conviction, damn fool, minutes, drive, rage, parked cars, slowdown, inevitable, young man, campus, live, ride, autumn colors, violence, indulgent, marilyn



00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.



00:18

Sometimes I have felt guilt for the safety I live with, for whatever has kept me alive when so many black men, women and children are dying. But lately, I'm trying to stare down my feelings of guilt, which are useless, paralyzing indulgent guilt. Why not rage, or conviction, or motivation in the face of all that works against others who deserve as much as anyone to go on living their lives, motivation to keep all of us safe.



01:00

Today's poem, pigeon and Hawk by Marilyn Nelson courageously names some of the forms of violence we live with. More importantly, it reminds us that such violence is not inevitable. We, in our rage and conscience and conviction can play a part in what happens and what is prevented from happening.



01:28

pigeon and Hawk by Marilyn Nelson, a new grad student far away from home, I took every step on trembling ground. I knew no one who are my friends. The other black student in the program, ducked and rushed away when our eyes met. seminar rooms were full of hungry dogs, snapping up scraps of nodding approval. At the end of a campus reception, I

accepted the offer of a ride from campus to my downtown room with bath. October evenings were getting cool. The walk over the bridge downtown felt dangerously long when it was dark. Did the young man who offered me a ride? Tell me his name? What was it about him that made me say? Yes, thanks, like a damn fool. When we were in his car, and he said, oops, he had forgotten something at his place. He had to pick up and asked if I'd mind if we stopped there. Why did I say okay? Did we talk during the drive? Was the radio on? Did I just watch the businesses and thinning traffic become a suburb, or his apartment complex was in a Woods already splendid in autumn colors. So beautiful. They took my words away. When he pulled up and said I should come in. It would only take a minute. Why did I go upstairs with him? Wait as the key unlocked his apartment and go inside. The building was silent. A big window in the living room looked at parking lots with a few parked cars and the glowing trees. He said, I'll be right back and disappeared into the bedroom. I turned to the view, thinking of nothing. My mind a blank page that grew emptier as the minutes past. What was he doing during those minutes? As I stood dreaming like a fat pigeon in the keen purview of a circling Hawk. What could he have needed to go home for? That was so important. He had to go there first before he drove me home. Was he wrestling with opportunity? Human horrors are not inevitable. Some people stop themselves before they cross moral divides. A drinking buddy might say cool it bro. A cop might take his knee off a black man's throat. A young man might come out and say okay, let's go and drive you home. What was his name?



04:40

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